

the House floor. I yield to the Representative from Virginia.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues for this opportunity to recognize this month as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and I thank my colleagues Congresswomen ANN WAGNER and KRISTI NOEM for organizing this effort.

I really appreciate how we are working together to raise awareness about this terrible crime that is happening in my district in northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, throughout Virginia, and throughout—unfortunately—our country. This growing criminal enterprise we know knows no boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Fairfax County Police Department in my district has established the northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force to crack down on this scourge. In the past 12 months alone, just to give you an idea of this crime that is in the local area, the task force has had 156 leads, 109 victim recoveries, 267 victims identified, and 73 suspects.

Mr. Speaker, while we have done great work to combat this terrible crime in Virginia, we clearly have more work to do on every level: the local level, State level, and national level.

Four years ago, Virginia, for example, was at the bottom of the Polaris Project anti-human trafficking State rankings. Now, we are at the top because we passed many of the kind of bills that we are going to be able to pass here tomorrow and additional bills that are going to be here tomorrow.

I am very honored to be able to join all of my colleagues and with our faith-based organizations and our law enforcement officials and to be able to continue this work now on a national level and to be able to vote for these important bills that we will be addressing tomorrow.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentleman for her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 351, LNG PERMITTING CERTAINTY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-5) on the resolution (H. Res. 48) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 351) to provide for expedited approval of exportation of natural gas, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A TRAGEDY

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to come to the floor at the end of the Special Order hour that Mrs. NOEM and Mrs. WAGNER have organized to join my colleagues in talking about the bills that are before us.

Human trafficking is an issue that affects every single county and community across this country—every single one. In my State of Tennessee and in the greater Nashville area, we have a wonderful organization, End Slavery Tennessee, that is doing great work to reach out, to minister, and to help.

I am so pleased that this week we are going to take the time to bring to the floor legislation that will be of help in training our medical personnel, that will also empower and encourage our law enforcement organizations and our faith-based and not-for-profit organizations.

This is a tragedy, modern-day slavery, that is taking place, the sex trafficking and the human trafficking, and I am so pleased that Congress is standing together to do something about it.

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STRENGTHENING CHILD WELFARE RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING ACT

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to be able to stand here in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act. This is one of many pieces of legislation this week that we are going to be doing in the Congress, and I am so grateful to all of the people who have been involved in this critically important issue. I would especially mention the cochair of the Congressional Foster Youth Caucus, KAREN BASS, for introducing this groundbreaking legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Hubert Humphrey said a society is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life. This is such a critical issue to protect the 400,000 children in America who find themselves in foster care and vulnerable to being preyed upon by traffickers who know all too well how to exploit a child's hunger for love, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.

We must put the structures in place to treat child victims of trafficking like victims instead of treating them like criminals.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I remind us all that our first job here is to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be able to stand here today in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act. I commend my colleague Representative KAREN BASS, the founder of the Co-chair of the Congressional Foster Youth Caucus, for introducing this groundbreaking legislation and for continuing to devote herself tirelessly to making a better future for these abused and neglected children.

Hubert Humphrey said a society is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life. Mr. Speaker, this is so applicable to our nation's foster youth. Right now over 400,000 children in America find themselves in foster care for no fault of their own. . . . And it is that trauma of abuse or neglect, that brought them into foster care in the first place, on top of being in unfamiliar circumstances, that makes them exponentially more vulnerable to be preyed upon by traffickers, who know all too well how to exploit a child's hunger for love, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.

For too long, and far too often, victims of trafficking have been allowed to fall through the cracks in the system. We have not put structures in place to treat child victims of trafficking like victims, and not treat them like criminals.

This legislation will begin to bridge the gaps where law enforcement and child protection workers need to be better equipped in order to best protect children known or suspected to be victims of sex trafficking. It also requires the submission of annual reports on the number of child victims of sex trafficking, and the reporting of that data to Congress so that we can better assess how to prevent child sex trafficking, and remove barriers that keep us from truly serving those that have become victims, and most of all, to protect the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable children to keep them from ever having to endure the evil of sex trafficking.

I am grateful for my colleague Representative BASS's leadership on this issue, and to House Leadership for recognizing the priority that must be placed upon protecting some of our nation's most vulnerable children. And I pray we will continue to work and stand together for the right of every child to be safe, protected, cherished, and loved.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

(Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California. Mr. Speaker, although slavery was abolished 150 years ago, today, modern slavery still exists in the form of human trafficking.

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to control other people for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation. According to the FBI, sex trafficking is the fastest-growing business of organized crime in the world.

Approximately 20.9 million victims of human trafficking exist in our world today, and hundreds of thousands of those victims are here in the United States.

California is not excluded from this criminal activity. In fact, within my congressional district in Orange County, there have been over 350 cases of human trafficking since 2004.

Victims are lured and manipulated by false promises of lucrative jobs, a loving relationship, or new opportunities and are usually between the ages of 12 to 14 when they first become victims of sex trafficking.